

1. Introduction : American Government, Social Studies, 12th, (1 semester)

- **Course Description**

The course is consistent with District priorities of fostering effective citizenship in students with opportunities to engage in activities involving critical thinking, speaking, listening, writing and other core competencies.

American Government is a course that examines our Constitutional foundations and governmental structure as well as the contemporary reality of our political system. Students will explore political behavior and the process of decision-making in the American system of government. The course draws upon the concepts and understandings learned in US History, World History, and World Cultures & Geography. Moreover, the curriculum complements topics covered in Economics. The course provides students with the opportunity to learn both the theory and the political reality of our governmental system and to develop the citizenship skills necessary to become informed, active participants in our political system.

2. Prerequisite skills and knowledge for success in this course:

- Grade level reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

3. List of program goals/learning outcomes to be met

G.1 The federal government is limited by principles which are meant to check power in order to promote order and guarantee civil liberties.

G.2 Judicial decisions are shaped by several key factors such as Constitutional interpretation and precedent.

G.3 There are many factors that influence the political and democratic processes.

Common Core/Cross-Curricular Program Goals

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

4. Proficiency scales aligned with the program goals listed above

Program Goal	Simpler Content Acquisition 2	Target Content Meaning 3	Advanced Content Transfer 4
	<p>What basic terminology, specific facts, or simply ideas are required for students to progress towards mastery of this goal?</p>	<p>What is the specific target content knowledge or skill required of students to progress towards mastery of this goal?</p>	<p>What is the more complex use of content knowledge or skill required of students to master this goal?</p>
<p>Program Goal 1: The federal government is limited by principles which are meant to check power in order to promote order and guarantee civil liberties.</p>	<p>Students understand principles that limit power, such as federalism, judicial review, popular sovereignty, checks, and civil rights.</p>	<p>Students explain how the principles of the Constitution and Bill of Rights create a government that promotes order and protects civil rights and civil liberties.</p>	<p>Students apply these principles to past and current problems and issues in policy making.</p>
<p>Program Goal 2: Judicial decisions are shaped by several key factors, such as Constitutional interpretation and precedent.</p>	<p>Students are able to identify some key factors that shape judicial decisions.</p>	<p>Students are able to use key factors to explain some landmark decisions.</p>	<p>Students are able to use key factors to analyze and/or predict outcomes of cases.</p>
<p>Program Goal 3: There are many factors that influence the democratic process.</p>	<p>Students identify the factors that influence the democratic process.</p>	<p>Students analyze the role of factors in campaigns, elections, the voting process, and policy making.</p>	<p>Students apply and predict the effects of political parties, media, interest groups, money, and citizens on the democratic process.</p>

5. Suggested textbook(s), materials, equipment and resources

McClenaghan, William A. *Magruder's American Government* Prentice-Hall (2006).

6. Requirements satisfied

U.C. A-G, TUHSD graduation requirement

7. Suggested Sequence of Units

I. Foundations of Republican Democracy

Program Goal 1

Description: In this unit, students will analyze and discuss the foundations of the American democracy, which will include an examination of Enlightenment ideals, and their influence on the principles of constitutional democracy. Particular focus will also be on the structure of federalism through the reading and examination of the federalist papers as well as modern day examples.

Sample Assessment: In the appendix you will find a simulation entitled “Xlandia.” This problem-based assessment pushes students to think about how they, as representatives of different democratic nations, will advise a fictitious country in the process of emerging from a long dictatorship. Before presenting a proposal, representatives must research and examine various forms of government and the features of a constitutional democracy. Ultimately, representatives will decide which form of government (or combination of) will best suit this new country, and present their findings to a committee.

II. Civil Rights and Judicial Precedent

Program Goal 2

Description: The focus of this unit is the Judicial Branch, the Supreme Court, and its role in protecting civil rights and liberties. Students will study the role and duties of the Judicial branch as well as the process of judicial review. In their study, students look at examples of key Supreme Court cases and the precedent they have left on American society. For example, when analyzing a specific case, students will learn the facts of the case, the constitutional questions or concerns at stake, and examine modern-day connections to the precedent set by the case.

Sample Assessment: In the appendix, you will find “What is Justice? - A Moot Court Simulation.” Students are either assigned the role of a Supreme Court Justice or a lawyer. Both roles require students to take an in-depth look at a specific Supreme Court case. Lawyers must understand the facts of case, relevant case precedents, write a formal brief, and present an oral argument to the court. Justices must also understand the facts of the case and precedents, but also understand any constitutional issues related to the case as well as hold an open conference, come to a decision and write a case analysis. The Moot Court process is meant to replicate the process of any case being presented to and heard by the Supreme Court.

III. Balance of Powers: Executive and Legislative Power

Program Goal 1

Description: The focus of this unit is the separation and balance of powers between the Executive and Legislative branches. More specifically, this unit will take an in-depth look at the structure, implied and expressed powers of both branches as well the system of checks to ensure a balanced, limited government. Students will study historical examples of actions taken by both the Executive

and Legislative branch, analyze the legitimacy of those actions, and apply their understanding of the constitutional rights given to both branches to current scenarios.

Sample Assessment: In the appendix, you will find “Presidential Actions: Appropriate Use of Power or Abuse of Power?” and “The Oval Office” (otherwise known as The White Paper), examples of assessments used to assess this program goal. You will also find information on the “Mock Senate Project”. All of these assessments push students to apply their understanding of both branches, and those branch's decision making processes and abilities. For example, in the Mock Senate Project, students work through each of the steps in the process of writing a bill to the passage of that legislation. Students walk away with an understanding of the inner workings of the legislative branch.

IV. The Media, Voters, Elections and Public Opinion

Program Goal 3

Description: In this unit, students will examine the numerous factors that impact the political process, such as the media, elections, finance, lobbying, and voters.

Sample Assessment: In the appendix, you will find an assessment regarding “Realignment” of political parties and voters. In this short reading, students will read about historical examples of realignment and the factors that played a role. Students will need to respond to three questions that will demonstrate their understanding of the content.

UC approval paperwork if applicable and NCAA approval paperwork if applicable